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Male Line of Descent

Chap. VI

(1) *Bani 'Ám.* According to Shaikh Nahar al Mutalaqim of the 'Ajman, who discussed this with me on 11th August, 1935, the members of every tribe or section of a tribe which have a common male ancestry are known as Bani 'Ám, *lit.* the children of one uncle. The Mutair and 'Ajman are more strict than others about the interpretation of the above, he said, and carry it to the seventh generation of ascendants. Beyond that, he added, genealogies were rather vague. Only blood relationship on the father's side (*'Amam*) gives the right of Bani 'Ám or Ibn 'Ám, and not the relationship on the mother's side, which is known under the name of *Khawál.*

A man in trouble can always rely on his *'Amam* to come to his assistance. They must do this regardless of consequences—and so must a tribe which has such relationship with another, the 'Ajman-Murra tribes for instance.

The 'Ajman and Murra were continually at each other's throats in the past, and raided and counter-raided in merry fashion, but when an outside enemy attacked the one, all private feuds were put aside, and the two united in resisting the attack. The reason was that they were descended from the common ancestor Yam and so were *Bani 'Ám.*

The families of Ibn Sa'ud, Ibn Subah, Ibn Khalifa and Abal Khail of Qassim are all *Bani 'Ám*, and so can always be counted on, in any serious difficulty, to come to one another's help. They are all 'Anizah, descended from the same distant ancestor.

A man's *Khawál*, his maternal relations, are of course useful, especially in offering sanctuary, but they are not under the same obligations as a man's *Bani 'Ám.*

'Amam al rajál, aḳam min khawálu is a well-known saying. This explains happenings which sometimes mystify the European. A man marries a woman from another tribe; she proves unfaithful (the instance I am describing has to my knowledge happened among 'Arabdar and Hadhar persons of Kuwait), the husband does not seem to mind much, but hints to the wife's *'Amam* that she is not all that she should be. They, being her *Bani 'Ám*, kill her, but do not enlist the outraged husband. She is slain to clear the family's good name, and to enable them to hold up their heads in the *mijlis arjal*, or counsels of men. Should a couple have children, a son and a daughter, and the daughter happens to disgrace the family, then either the

Ortho-Cousin Marriage

613 627 604 893 father or the son (the girl's brother) has to kill her to wipe out the dishonour. If her father is dead and she has no brother, then her *walad 'ám*, a male cousin on her father's side, must take action and do the deed.

613 604 721 628 Between *bani 'ám* certain actions are taboo. For instance, a man must never seize and bind one of his *'amam* even though he be a thief. Nor must he, if on the warpath, attack his *'amam* by a *dawn* attack or raid him after *midnight*. It is *'aib* (disgraceful) to do this.

Between *bani 'ám* the generally agreed price of a man killed (*'idiya*) is fixed at 50 camels, a man, and a rifle. The payment of these settles the blood feud. Should an outsider, however, slay a man there is a different scale, and should he kill an important shaikh such as the Al Subah, Al Sa'ud, Al Dushan, Al Sha'alan, then only blood can expiate the crime. (See Chapter XLII.)

WALAD 'ÁM

601 (2) *Walad 'Ám*—father's brother's son (first cousin—male on father's side).

BINT 'ÁM

613 582 (3) *Bint 'Ám*—father's brother's daughter (first cousin—female—on father's side). See also Chapter VIII.

[609] A man always has the right to marry his *bint 'ám*, and no man, not even his parents or the girl's parents, can deny him this right.

Should he voluntarily forgo it, he will give the girl a paper, saying that he does not want her. The whole idea of this first-cousin marriage is protective, and is designed to keep the family intact. A girl knows from earliest childhood that her future husband will be her *walad 'ám*. She cannot evade such marriage unless her cousin waives his right or allows another man to purchase this right from him. This latter procedure is not common.

On the whole, this first-cousin marriage works well. It at least insures a girl a husband, as soon as she comes of age to marry. Among more civilised Arabs it has led to much abuse, and brothers have prevented their sisters marrying lest they take property out of the immediate family. This fraternal tyranny has frequently been exercised among the Al Sa'adun shaikhs in Iraq.

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Badawin Love Affairs

RIGHTS OF IBN 'ÁM

If a girl refuses to be wedded to her *ibn 'ám*, he may slay her without becoming liable to pay blood money in compensation.

If the *ibn 'ám* knows that his cousin does not want him, being already in love with someone else, he can forbid (*haiyyir 'alaiha*) the marriage, and the girl may die a spinster.

If a girl loves another and her father dies, she has a chance of getting her freedom from her *ibn 'ám* who is *haiyyiring* her ("hajjir" is the correct technical term for keeping her to himself), if she goes and begs her freedom immediately after her father's death: "My father has died, I want thee to release me in return for my father who has passed away", she says. In such case the *hajjir* is expected to be generous and release her—but he is not bound to do so. If he refuses her only remedy is to elope. She then flees with her lover to a distant land or tribe, and there marries him after putting herself and her husband under the protection of a shaikh. She remains in constant danger from her cousin, however. Her husband is considered as guilty as a murderer and can only secure his life by the payment of blood money.

Should a Badawin elope with and marry a "white slave girl" (e.g. Circassian, Georgian or Armenian) or a girl of inferior tribe (he can on no account marry a slave and defile the tribe's blood), he can never return again to his kin; they will kill him.

It is the duty of every Badawin to marry and procreate. The more children he possesses, the more powerful his kinsmen. He would be expelled the tribe were he to refuse to do his duty in this respect. Without his kin a Badawin would be the most miserable of outcasts. Musil brings this out clearly in his book, *Manners and Customs of the Ruwala Bedouins*.

There are, of course, cases where a man sees a girl, not his cousin, and falls madly in love with her. If she herself is not bound to her *ibn 'ám* a regular courtship follows, the man finding opportunity of meeting when she is looking after the camels or the sheep, much as our own youths and maidens do. I have known very violent love affairs of this type, and the Badawin loses his head over his lass quite as much as the ordinary English youth, if not more.